

COME TO JESUS.—No. 5.

COME BY PRAYER.

THOUGH you cannot *see* Jesus, you can *speak* to him. You can *pray*. God has permitted, and even commanded us to do this. How great a privilege to be allowed to speak to God. "Call upon me in the day of trouble." "Watch and pray." "Pray without ceasing." Prayer requires no fine, well-arranged sentences. The simplest utterance of your heart's desire is prayer. Those desires themselves, unbreathed, are prayer. You need not wait until you can enter a church to pray; you may pray *everywhere*. And Jesus is always waiting for the prayers of poor sinners; so that not one ever escapes his notice. His ear is always open. It is difficult to speak to kings and princes; they can only be seen sometimes, and then only a few persons are permitted to come near them. But all may come with their petitions to Jesus, however poor and despised, and at all times too. Whatever good things you want for the soul, pray. For pardon, for a new heart, for faith, for holiness, for comfort, pray. You cannot pray in vain. You may be sure of such prayers being answered. There are some things which even God cannot do. He cannot sin, and he cannot refuse to listen to a poor sinner's prayer, for he has promised. "Ask, and it shall be given you," said Jesus; and his word declares, "He cannot deny himself." Be then encouraged to pray. However vile and helpless you think you are, you are not too bad to pray. Pray, if you can only utter such a petition as this, "Save, Lord, or I perish." Make a habit of prayer. Find some place where you can be alone. "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and shut the door." Rise before the work of the day begins, that you may have time to pray. Lay open your heart before God. Tell him how vile, and helpless, and wretched you are. Confess your sins, and cry for pardon. Read the Bible, and ask for that holiness which is commended there. Say, "Lord, I am ignorant, teach me. My heart is hard, soften it. Convert me by thy Holy Spirit. Help me to come to Jesus—to believe, love, and obey him. Save me from sin, and fit me for heaven." And let your heart throughout the day often ascend to God, even while engaged in your necessary labor. "Pray without ceasing." If the answer does not seem to come at once, pray on, and success is certain. A praying soul can never be lost. You cannot perish while you are sincerely calling upon Jesus, saying, "Lord, have mercy upon me a sinner."

COME IN THE BOLDNESS OF PRAYER.

It is wonderful that creatures so sinful as we are should be allowed to pray at all. When we consider what we are, and what God is, we may well tremble when we come to him, and fear lest he should reject us. But he has encouraged us to come, even with "boldness, to the throne of grace." This does not mean that we are to come without deep reverence and humility, but that we are to pray with a full persuasion that God will answer us. There are many examples of answers to prayer. Hezekiah prayed, and the army of Sennacherib was smitten with death. Elijah prayed, and fire came down to consume his sacrifice. The apostles prayed, and the Holy Ghost descended on them with miraculous gifts. The church prayed, and Peter was delivered from prison by an angel. We are not to expect that all we ask for respecting this life will be given us, for we often desire what would do us harm. We may be sure, however, that God will give us what is best. But when we pray for blessings for our *souls*—for pardon, and holiness, and salvation—we may be quite certain of being answered; for we are told, that if we ask any thing according to God's will, he heareth us; and we are also told, that God is "willing that all men should be saved." Jesus said, "Ask, and it *shall* be given;" and, "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do." He prays for us. Our best prayers are far too unworthy for God to notice, but he listens because Jesus pleads. If you wrote a petition to a king, but none at the palace knew you, and you were dressed in rags, and after doing your best, the writing was covered with blots, would you not fear that you would never be admitted, or if you were, that the petition would not be read? But suppose the king's son were to come, and say, "I will present your petition myself, and ask my father to grant it." Jesus does this. He presents our feeble prayers, and says, "For my sake, bless this poor sinner, and grant his request." And we are told that "him the Father heareth *always*." "He ever liveth to make intercession." Trembling, mourning sinner, rejoice. You have a Friend at court. However unworthy *your* petitions are, Jesus prays for you, and *his* prayers always prevail. What more can you need to encourage you? Come then with "boldness to the throne of grace, that you may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

See 1 Kings, 18: 21-39; 2 Kings, 19; Matt. 7: 7-11; John 14: 13, 14; 17; Acts 1: 13, 14; 2: 1-4; 12: 5-17; Heb. 4; 14-16; 7: 25; 1 John, 5: 14.

COME IN FAITH.

In the New Testament we read very much about faith. We are said to be "justified by faith," and "saved by faith," and are told to "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, that we may be saved. Faith is confidence, reliance. If I am hungry, and a kind friend offers me something and says it is bread, but it is dark, and I cannot see, yet, if I begin at once to eat it, this is faith. I trust in his word. If I am sick, and medicine is given me which I am told will do me good, and I drink it, this is faith. I believe or have confidence in the doctor's skill. Jesus came into the world to die for sinners, He says, "Believe in me. I have purchased a full pardon for you, and you may go free. It cost my own blood to obtain it, but you are freely welcome to it. If you will obey my words, and trust in my protection, I will engage to save you from death and hell: I am quite able to do this. Here is bread to eat, which will make you live for ever if you eat it: here is a medicine which will so cure your soul's sickness that you shall never die. Come unto me—believe in me, and you shall be saved." Faith is just trusting to what Jesus says. Faith is simply coming to Jesus. He has died for thee. Believe it, and take the benefit of his dying. He has opened the prison door for thee. Believe it, and make thine escape. He is willing to bear thy burden for thee. Believe it, and cast thy sins upon him. He has paid all thy debts. Rejoice. He brings salvation to thee, and says, "It shall be thine, if thou art willing." Stretch forth thy hand, and take it with a grateful heart. Like the prodigal in the parable, thou hast wandered far from home; but Jesus has obtained for thee permission to return. Thy father, for his sake, is willing to welcome thee back. Believe it, and say, "I will arise, and go to my Father." You desire to be trusted by your husband, or wife, or children; you would feel hurt by their doubting your word. So Jesus wishes to be believed when he says, "Poor sinner, I am able and willing to save thee. Come unto me." Do not grieve him by distrusting his word. If you do not come, because you think you are too great a sinner, you say, in effect, that he is *not* able to save you, though he tells us "he is able to save to the uttermost ALL who come." You make him a liar. Believe that he really will do what he promises. Go to him at once. Say to him, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief. Thou art able to save to the uttermost—save me."

See John 3: 14-18; Acts 16: 30, 31; Romans 5: 1; Hebrews 11.

COME AS A SINNER—JUST AS YOU ARE.

PERHAPS you say, "How can I, who am so vile a sinner, venture to come near the holy Jesus? Will he permit such a wretch to approach him? Must I not wait till I am more fit?" Dear fellow-sinner, your very sinfulness is your best fitness. What you think to be a hinderance is your best encouragement; for "Jesus Christ came into the world to save *sinners*," and therefore to save such as you. "I came not to call the righteous, but *sinners* to repentance." Not that there are any who are really righteous, but there are many who *think* themselves so, and such persons will never be received by Christ. We must come to him in our true character, if we come at all. We are great sinners. We have broken God's laws. We have indulged in wickedness in our hearts, as well as in open conduct; we have quenched the Spirit, and despised the love of Jesus. Everything we do is full of imperfection. We cannot make ourselves pure. And if we come to Jesus pretending we are righteous, we only mock him. Instead of thinking we are "rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing," we must come as those who are "poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked." Thus we must come to Jesus, and confess our unworthiness. In one of his parables he spoke of a self-righteous man, who thanked God that he was better than others; and of a broken-hearted penitent, who did not venture to raise his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" It was the latter who went home pardoned and saved. And if we would be accepted by Jesus, we must go to him in the same spirit, saying, "God be merciful to me a *sinner*!" And we must not wait, thinking that we shall ever be more worthy. No, our souls are stained through and through with sin, and all our washing will never get rid of one dark spot. The blood of Christ alone can make us clean. We can never make ourselves better. We must come to Jesus to make us better; and till then nothing is done. Our very first duty is to come to Jesus. Come then, poor sinner. Wait not another moment, foolishly thinking you will be more fit by and by. You will never be more fit, and never more welcome, than at this moment. Jesus knows, far better than even you do, how sinful and vile you are; yet he does not say, "Wait," but "Come." Come then, with all your sins and weakness, and hardness of heart, come to Jesus. Come as a sinner, and come just as you are.

See Psalm 51; Matt. 9: 10-13; Luke 18: 9-14; 1 Tim. 1: 15; Rev. 3: 17, 18.

